



Groton Trails Committee

TOWN OF GROTON

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**** Monthly Meeting Minutes **** **June 15, 2021**

Attendees: (Present: X)			Visitors:
Chair	Paul Funch	X	Wendy Good
Vice Chair	Bob Ordemann		Bruce Easom
Clerk	Laura DeGroot		Ralph Acaba
Members	Olin Lathrop	X	
	Jim Peregoy	X	
	Kevin Barrett		
	Stephen Legge	X	
	Wanfang Murray	X	
	Jason Remillard		
	Lisa Irelan	X	
	Derek Cianci	X	

Call to Order

Chair Funch called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Approval of May Minutes

Changed Mahoney Trail to Mahoney Lane.

VOTE: Lathrop moved to approve the May 18 minutes as amended and Peregoy seconded; motion unanimously approved.

Riverwalk Project / Marion Stoddart Trail

Funch reported no progress regarding Taisey property as location for accessible trail. Land purchase has stalled because purchase offer has not been accepted. Looking to relocate project to Bertozzi Conservation Area. Proposed access off Townsend Road and dirt road that goes into Bertozzi area. Trail would progress southwest off entry road then turn northwest before making a large loop southwest again and back around to the starting point. Future possibilities exist to extend the trail northwest along the river to the Conservation Commission area where there is a suitable location for a swimming hole. Lathrop mentioned GTC has no permission to maintain trails in this area right now. Funch responded explaining

the MassWildlife Director, Pat Huckery, has expressed interest in providing an accessible trail for fishers and hunters. Concern was mentioned regarding the trail being under water right now on the south side of the parcel, but the proposed trail avoids that area.

Wendy Good asked how/where parking would get addressed. Funch said the intent is to use the parking area for the Squannacook River Rail Trail (room for approximately thirty vehicles). Funch explained some work would be required to spread stone dust, or something similar, to make the parking area more conducive to accessible users. Easom explained the Squannacook River Rail Trail has an agreement with MA Fish & Game (MassWildlife) whereby if parking lot capacity is regularly exceeded, they can expand it into the additional railroad right-of-way to the south.

Signs/Sign Posts

Funch explained he and Lathrop ran out of sign posts and ordered twenty-one cut-to-size galvanized steel channel posts. Volume order for more than needed secured a 10 % discount for an invoice total of \$531.06 for which they were seeking Committee approval.

VOTE: Lathrop motioned to approve the invoice; Peregoy seconded. Motion was unanimously approved, and invoice was sent around for the required six signatures.

Lathrop reviewed the need for four additional signs on the Priest Trail and presented mock-ups for two of the signs. Lathrop did not have the additional two sign mock-ups on hand to review but agreed to send them via email to Committee members after the meeting. The following intended sign placements for each sign were reviewed by the Committee:

1. One at Martins Pond Road at the intersection of the private drive in a place where the public can see it to identify location of a trail down the private drive.
2. One on the trail head post on private drive
3. Junction of Priest Trail and Chestnut Hill Loop Trail
4. Bruce Clements and Priest Trail

Easom updated the Committee on a visit from the MA Recreational Trails Program Administrator Amanda Lewis who walked the bridge on Gibbet Hill and approved signs for DCR grant partnership and bridge name.

Mapping

Peregoy provided details on his progress towards improving Groton Trails mapping. Peregoy met with Remillard to review existing setup/technology. Remillard explained he feels mapping infrastructure is at end of its life right now - is using older technology.

Peregoy provided suggestions for next steps: Use OpenStreetMap tiles or use Mapbox tiles. Both would need clean-up before use to remove inaccuracies. Peregoy also investigated options to resolve the GPS issues via open source Javascript. As a test, Peregoy made a copy

of the existing GTC website and loaded updated GPS software, which has compass capability that can access gyroscope on mobile phones to show trail/map users which direction they are heading. Peregoy requested Committee members test this new setup out on the trails and explained he would email a summary of his findings after the meeting and include a link to the test site.

Funch questioned how the new technology setup would allow the Committee to mark private property - how to resolve for places the map inaccurately identifies as public trails. Peregoy explained he can manually go in and remove the trail, but Lathrop countered saying others can go in and add it back. Lathrop requested Peregoy look at whether Mapbox has some existing keying functionality that would allow marking of lesser trails.

Peregoy discussed his goal of trying to get away from generating custom tiles and instead use what's provided. If the Committee maintains the data in OpenStreetMap it removes the need to use the tile generation. Remillard also explained there are other options, but they are more manual involving regular updates to the tiles to keep them current. Use of OpenStreetMap is more automated because it updates overnight. The following additional benefits of moving to OpenStreetMap were noted by Peregoy and Remillard:

- * More automated, updates overnight
- * Uses sets of tiles already precomputed by Mapbox - functionality on Groton Trails site just zooms in
- * OpenStreetMap doesn't end at Groton so can show connecting trails across town borders

Murray said focus should be to get us/Committee onto a platform with which we can work now. Down the road additional research can take place to look into functionality to allow use of extra attributes.

Peregoy explained OpenStreetMaps are publicly available for use and we/Committee would not be using any additional functionality that would require licensing. Remillard noted the only cost to the Committee today is for registration of domain name (~\$60 biennially).

Funch questioned whether the new environment would still maintain pictures and text describing trails. Peregoy answered explaining pictures and text are via a separate database layered onto OpenStreetMaps. Website is hosted on GitHub - project is on GitHub and there is a Content Delivery Network (CDN) proxy server that gives us the Groton Trails domain name.

Peregoy to send out email summarizing all his proposed changes.

Social Media

Irelan provided an update of progress. Facebook postings continue. Funch mentioned he noticed engagement uptick with new postings. Postings getting the most interest are updates on volunteer activities related to trail maintenance and informational postings about things seen on the trails. Irelan thanked Committee members who submitted pictures, trail tidbits, and conservation activities for her to post and requested Committee members keep sending.

Research was conducted by Irelan to identify current administrator of existing “GrotonMATrails” Instagram account, which was believed to be related to the Groton Trails Committee. Upon speaking with the identified owner, Irelan learned the account is a private instance and explained we/the Committee can just create a new one that will remain with the Committee.

Irelan explained she has not yet reached out to sister organizations to discuss posting/reposting of shared interest content but would address it in the coming weeks. Funch requested a few trail maintenance updates get posted: Groton Hills-Kailey’s Way Trail and Sawtell Conservation Area cleaned up/mowed, brush cut back for easier access.

Trails Committee Open Spots for New Members (x3)

Funch informed the Committee of the following committee members who are stepping down:

- Remillard (6 yrs. served)
- Ordemann (4 yrs. served)
- Barrett (3 yrs. served)

Funch introduced Ralph Acaba as interested applicant for an open seat on the Committee. Acaba provided a brief background of his interest and experience: Long-time volunteer on Trails Committee projects, been on a few non-profit boards, retired from Raytheon after 37 years, trail runner, biker.

Committee members provided overview of what is involved: monthly meetings, special events in which committee participates, and helping in whatever areas are of interest.

VOTE: Lathrop made a motion that the Committee recommend to the Town Manager to present Ralph Acaba to the Select Board as a candidate for an open spot on the Trails Committee; Cianci seconded. Committee unanimously approved.

Harris McWade, second candidate for open seat was not able to attend the meeting.

Project Updates & Other Business

Chain Saw Training Q&A - Murray asked when next training opportunity might happen. Funch said possibly in the fall - timing related to grant cycle changes (believes next cycle may be in August).

Brown Trail Re-routing Project (off Chicopee Row) - Funch updated group. Tom Delaney prepping to do excavation work - expect this may start this week or next.

Fitch's Estate on Wallace Road (near Fitch's Bridge) - Bob Collins put in easement on the deed for public access on the old Brookline & Pepperell railroad right-of-way trail so that people can get to Fitch's Bridge. Long-term solution is still needed to address access in perpetuity.

Chestnut Hill Loop Trail - All work completed.

Whispering Brook - Lathrop submitted RDA, scheduled for Conservation Commission is first meeting in July (7/13/21). New RDA for building trail northwest of Whispering Brook Road down and around to connect through on southwest side of subdivision. We have approval from Conservation Commission to build trail on their property from southeast side of cul de sac, but abutting property owner Greg Sheldon does not want trail built there. But northwest trail is not adequate for mountain bikers or equestrians due to the narrowness of dry ground over long sections.

Williams Barn - new loop trail off Bruce Clements trail - Funch asked whether additional committee members have had a chance to walk and review proposed routing of new loop trail. Would like to get Committee approval to submit RDA for the work.

VOTE: Funch made a motion to submit RDA to ask Conservation Commission to approve the trail; Peregoy seconded. Votes were six in favor (Murray, Peregoy, Cianci, Funch, Ireland, Legge), one opposed (Lathrop).

Eagle Scout Court of Honor - Ceremony held on June 6, 2021, for Eric Tobies and Hunter O'Toole. Funch, Lathrop, and Easom attended. Eagle Scout project on Walker parcel proposed by Jesse Hendershot has been dropped.

Complete Streets - Legge reminded the group that Groton grants were not approved last year. They will submit same set of projects this fall for review and approval including sidewalk extension on north side of Lowell Road from where it ends today to Gibbet Hill driveway. Legge noted Tom Delaney prefers the sidewalk extension stay on the same side of the road as existing sidewalk to avoid two Rte. 40 crossings.

Squannacook River Rail Trail - Easom communicated that they have opened the Depot Street to Meeting House Road section (1.1 miles).

Adjournment

VOTE: Lathrop moved to adjourn; Legge seconded; motion unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:49pm.